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Directorate of Intelligence

PROLIFERATION DIGEST

November 1995

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Special Issue on Advanced
Conventional Weapons

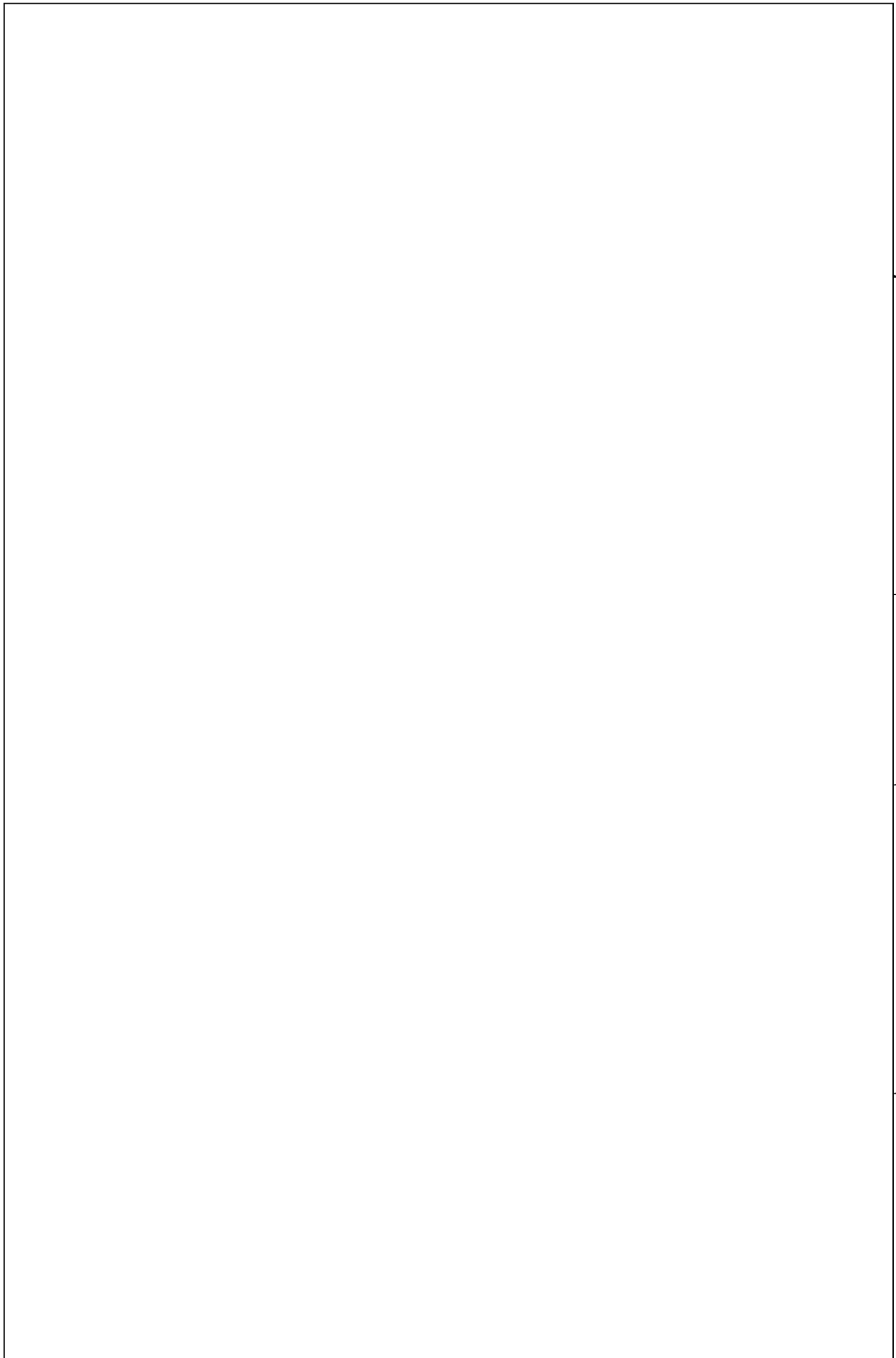
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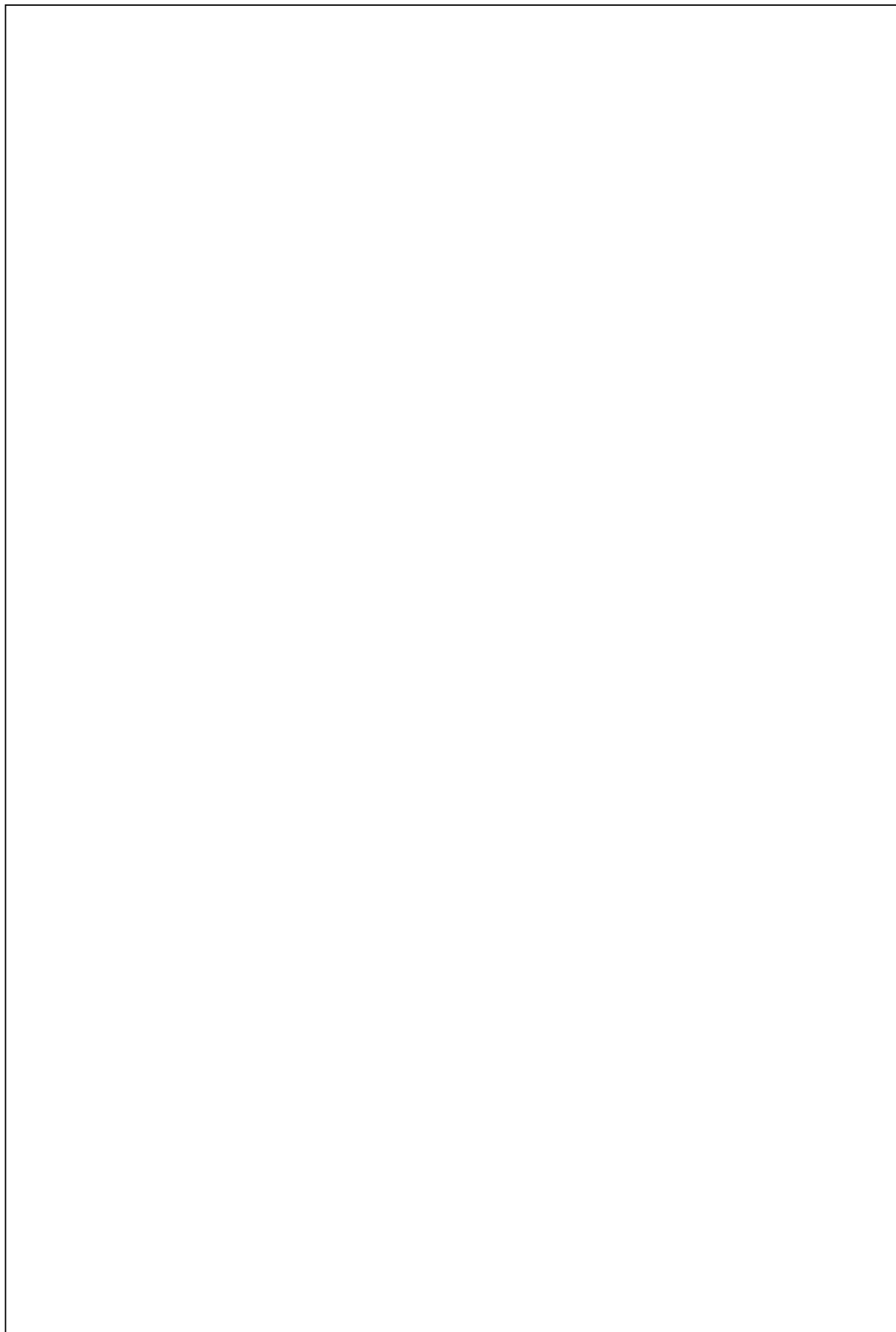
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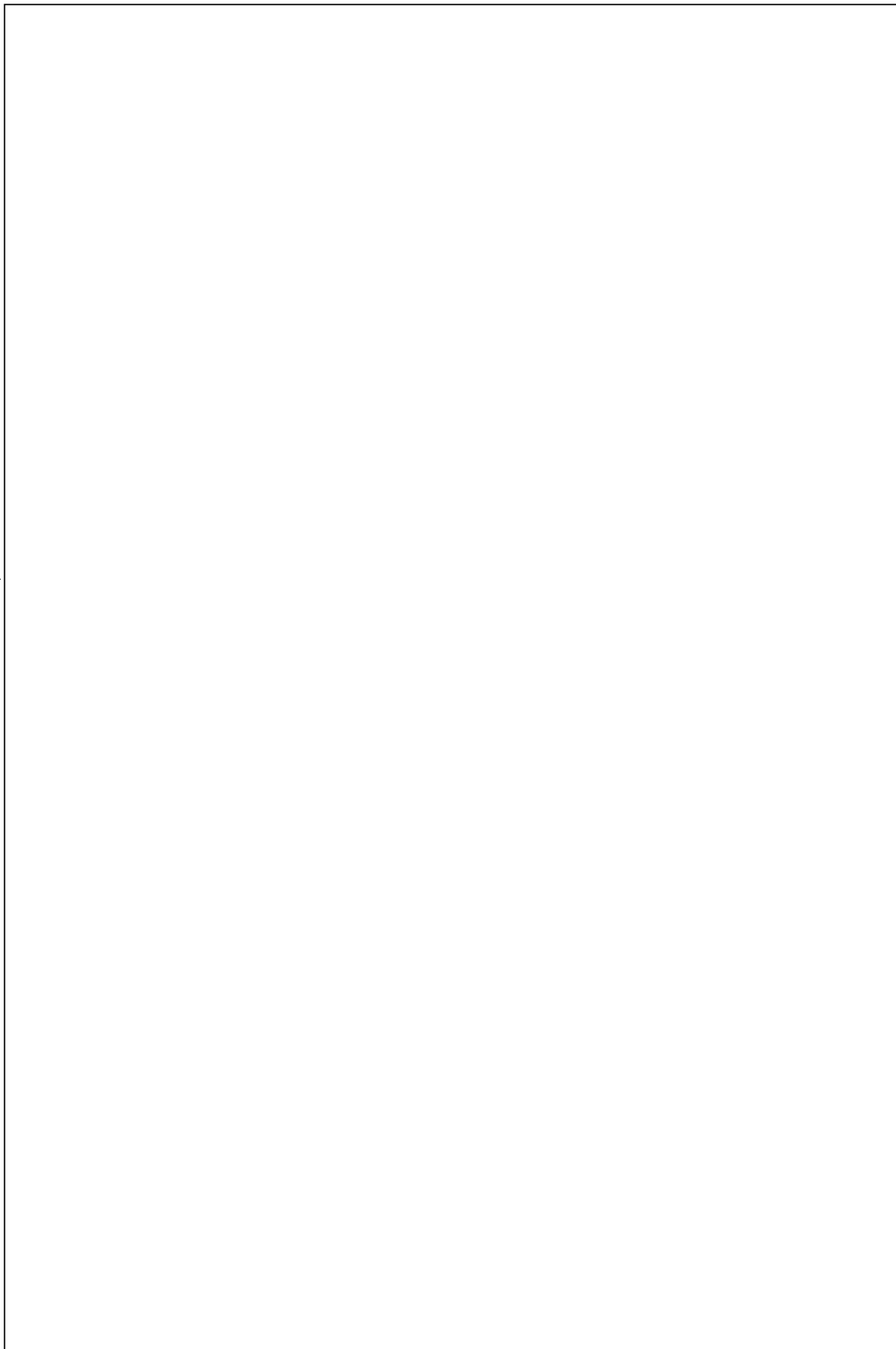
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[redacted] an underground event—probably a nuclear test—occurred in September at China's Lop Nur nuclear test site. None of the three probable testing scenarios—testing of a tactical nuclear artillery shell, a safety test, or a hydrodynamic experiment—is completely consistent with all of the evidence. [redacted]





Chinese Nuclear Event in September []

[] an underground event—probably a nuclear test—occurred between 4 and 6 September at China's nuclear test site at []

We have assessed three probable nuclear testing scenarios in descending order of likelihood. None is completely consistent with all of the evidence:

- *Nuclear artillery shell.* An unidentified type of test of a “tactical” uranium artillery shell at Lop Nur was planned []
[] China has had the capability to design such a weapon for decades. In most cases, a full-yield test of a nuclear device [] China might have conducted a partial-yield test for a variety of reasons. We also cannot rule out a full-yield test of an extremely low-yield design. A failure of a gun-assembled device—the most likely design for a uranium artillery shell—is considered unlikely.
- *Safety test.* Safety tests are conducted to determine what yield a weapon would produce if accidentally detonated. This scenario is consistent with []
- *Hydronuclear experiment.* In hydronuclear experiments, some fissile material is removed from a warhead to minimize nuclear yield and provide data to calibrate codes at low yields, and perhaps to examine some

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potential warhead problems. [redacted] a hydronuclear experiment went out of control at China's Southwest Institute of Fluid Physics in 1993, resulting in contamination that forced scientists to seal off a portion of the laboratory. Such mishaps may have motivated the Chinese to transfer their hydronuclear activities to Lop Nur.

[redacted]

[redacted]

